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**AMERICAN FARMER
SEES THE
SOVIET UNION**

By
**JULIUS
WALSTAD**

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On Farming in America: OCT 24 1945

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Foreword

Julius Walstad was the first official delegate to the Soviet Union to be elected by thousands of American farmers. He visited Soviet farming regions in the Fall of 1934, a year in which severe drought had occurred in both the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. In this pamphlet he reports what he saw.

Arrangements in this country were made by the Friends of the Soviet Union; while in the U.S.S.R., Walstad was a guest of the Trade Unions.

The Farmers National Committee of Action is publishing this pamphlet in order to bring the report of Julius Walstad's tour to all those farmers who raised the money to send him as their delegate; and to all other interested farmers.

AN AMERICAN FARMER SEES THE SOVIET UNION

By JULIUS WALSTAD

HOW I HAPPENED TO GO

GOING to Russia was the last thing any South Dakota farmer might expect to do and I certainly was no different. I've just come back, and Russia doesn't seem so far away any more. Their plains are like ours, the soil is the same, even the same prairie grasses grow there. Yet everything is run different. And that is what I'm going to tell about.

No farm organization had ever sent an official delegate to Russia, and last spring the Friends of the Soviet Union, set up to spread information about Russia, forwarded an invitation to the Farmers' National Committee of Action to include a farmer delegate in the group visiting the Soviet Union during the November celebration of the anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Trade Unions had sent workers over before to look over the factories and to tell American workers how Russian workers were treated. After learning that the farm delegate would have special opportunity to investigate the conditions of farmers, the Farmers' National Committee accepted this invitation and immediately wrote to a large number of different farm organizations asking them to elect a representative farmer.

I was nominated by the National Convention of the United Farmers' League at Minneapolis last June. Members of 21 other organizations and groups endorsed this nomination. I don't think that all of these groups had heard of me, but probably they did hear about how we fought the statewide injunction against the United Farmers' League in South Dakota last summer, and also that a fascist gang attacked me and the rest of our farm school. The National Executive Committee of the Farmers' National Com-

mittee of Action held a meeting which confirmed my election and endorsement by all these different organizations.

I am writing the story of my trip so that what I saw and learned can be distributed as my report to the membership of the farm organizations that sent me over.

The cost of my trip over and back was \$285. This amount includes round-trip bus fare from South Dakota to New York, and a round trip steamship ticket. From the time I left England in a Soviet steamer, and during the time I was in the U.S.S.R., I was a guest of the Trade Unions and had no expenses, except for the few things I bought to bring back home. Practically every bit of the \$285 was raised by the farmers of this country through the sale of certificates sent out by the National Committee. More than 700 farmers and other friendly people from 24 states, covering the four corners of the United States, bought these certificates.

The rest of the delegates from the United States consisted of: Robert Whisner, Westinghouse worker from Turtle Creek, Pa., representing the workers of the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Co. plant; Victor Majeski, textile worker from Pawtucket, R.I., member of the State Strike Committee of the U.T.W. of A., and endorsed by his local and by the Pawtucket local of the Socialist Party; Frederick Gunsser, textile worker from Philadelphia, Pa., Federation of Full-Fashioned Hosiery Workers of America, Local No. 1, affiliated with the U.T.W. of A. (A.F. of L.); Helen Glinski, representing coal miners from West Virginia; Mary Cozmauoff, representing Polish steel workers of Gary, Indiana, and Polish workers' newspaper; James Sheffield, representing Boston locals of the Marine Workers Industrial Union; and Herbert Goldfrank, National Secretary of the Friends of the Soviet Union.

THE TRIP OVER

I took a French boat to England, the *Ile de France*. Since we planned to take a Russian boat from there, I asked an old worker on the London dock about the Russian boats. He said, "They are the cleanest boats that come here, but under the Tsar they were

the rustiest and dirtiest". Sure enough, the Soviet boat, the *Rykov*, was clean as a whistle, but what surprised me even more were the working conditions. On the *Ile de France* the sailors worked 14 to 16 hours a day, while on the *Rykov* they worked 8 hours. On the *Ile de France* the men are laid off for 3 months a year without pay, while on the *Rykov* the men are given a month's vacation with full pay. If they want to, the Russians can take special study courses during their vacations, to qualify them for better jobs. They have old-age pensions and trade unions. I saw the officers and the sailors eat together and treat each other as equals while off-duty, but this is not allowed to interfere with ship discipline. The crew sleep two in a cabin; on the *Ile de France*, where a common passenger like myself could not visit the sailors' quarters, the sailors told me they bunked 20 to 32 in cabins below the water-level. If anything, the sailors' food is better than the passengers' on the *Rykov*, while on the *Ile de France* it was just the opposite.

LENINGRAD

I landed in Russia on November 1 and spent the first few days in Leningrad. The second day in the city we visited a turbine factory which before the revolution was owned by a German. He had employed four hundred workers. In the factory we met, by chance, an old fellow of about 55 who had worked there in the days of the Tsar. He told us that he had worked 16 hours a day before in very bad conditions. In 1917, as soon as the revolution was over, hours were cut to 10. Today they work 7 hours a day and there are thousands of workers in the factory. Seven hours, by the way, is now the regular working day in industry throughout the country, with the exception of some of the heaviest work, like certain types of mining, where it is 6 hours. This worker makes much more money in 7 hours than he used to make in 16. The workers in the factory belong to a trade union.

Located in the home of the former owner of the factory is the factory day nursery for children of the mothers who work during the day. Here the children are fed and cared for by experts, free

of charge. There is also a laundry in connection with the factory. The workers in the factory have their own apartment house with one, two, and three room flats, depending on the size of their families. Rents are a percentage of wages. Very close to the apartment house is a school with playgrounds and small parks all close together. I learned that these conveniences are a regular part of every factory in the country.

Workers' old-age pensions begin at 55 and they get medical care all the time. We spoke to the doorkeeper, a man of about 65, who was getting a pension of 200 rubles a month. He was working anyway "to help build Socialism" and earning an additional 100 rubles per month. One of the changes he mentioned since the old days was that women receive the same pay as men for the same work and are encouraged to learn the same work.

The next day we went to the former Tsar's country estate just outside of Leningrad. Here he used to give big parties and entertain the diplomats and nobility of the world. This summer estate has now been changed into a "Children's Village". The same magnificent buildings with many additions and improvements have now become hospitals and rest homes for sick children who are sent here and cared for free of charge.

CELEBRATING THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE REVOLUTION

The Russian "Fourth of July" comes on November 7th because that was the day in 1917 when the workers and farmers took power. They have held it ever since. We got to Moscow in time for their celebration of the 17th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Our delegation was given places on the reviewing stand which stretched across one side of the Red Square. This great square used to be the scene of execution and torture. Today it is the square of revolutionary heroes and the center of the annual commemoration of the revolution. Back of our seats was the ancient Kremlin wall, which used to be the fortified limit of old Moscow and now surrounds the main government offices. Across the Red Square was the great government department store and at the opposite end was ancient St. Basil's Cathedral with its

spires painted many different colors, like turnips upside down. In front of the cathedral was the large round execution block where Ivan the Terrible (and other tsars) used to have workers' heads and ears chopped off while he gave the signal from the nearest Kremlin tower. At the center of the reviewing stand was the great polished red granite tomb of Lenin, the leader of the Revolution. I learned that nearby, at the base of the Kremlin wall, John Reed, an American who took part in the Revolution, is buried.

The demonstration began with the parade of the Red Army with all its machines of defense. I heard the Red Army men take the oath: "Defend the Soviet Union. Support the interests of the workers and farmers of the whole world". Overhead were hundreds of airplanes and the giant Maxim Gorki plane broadcasting the song of the working class: *The International*. I noticed the diplomats and military men from foreign countries watching the motorized Red Army with a kind of sickly expression. Some of the less important ones apparently forgot themselves a little, and waved and cheered too.

Then came the workers and farmers. I never expect to see such a sight again—1,750,000 people marching for nine hours. Thousands of them were armed, carrying their rifles on their shoulders. I began to understand that here was a government that dared to arm its people. I was told that the workers in the Soviet Union are armed—because it is their own government.

I saw the leaders of the workers and farmers standing on the balcony of Lenin's tomb reviewing the military demonstration and waving for hours to the mass of enthusiastic people marching through the Square. Even if I had seen nothing else in Russia, I would have known that these people are happy and full of hope. A million and three-quarter men, women and children, cannot be trained to laugh, cheer and sing as these people did. They were marching ahead—I couldn't help thinking of worried neighbors back in South Dakota, facing depression and drought, not knowing where they are going, not knowing even if there will be enough to eat. Then I would look at the throngs of cheering

people. I also thought of articles appearing in American newspapers telling how Soviet Russia suffers under a terrible tyranny. I know the right answer now. The Soviet government could not last long unless these millions of armed and organized workers and farmers wanted it.

Farmer delegates from all over the Soviet Union were in that parade. I learned that such celebrations are taking place twice a year, on May 1st and on November 7th, every year since the Revolution. They are held in every city and in every town and village of the whole nation. A two-day national holiday is declared both times. The Russians celebrate from morning to night and have a day to rest up after the activity.

THE CHURCH AND RELIGION

Before leaving Moscow, I want to say something about churches in the U.S.S.R. and about freedom of religion there. In Leningrad we attended services at a Greek Catholic church and in Moscow we went to three Roman Catholic churches. After a sermon in one of the Moscow churches the priest, Tschacowe, talked with the Canadian delegate in French. In answer to the question, "Does the Soviet government interfere in any way with the practice of religion"? he replied: "You can see for yourself that we have free religion here". He also told us that he had been sent to his post as a missionary from France. Some of the churches had as many as eight priests.

Most of the people have, however, lost interest in the church; instead, they are busy building factories and improving agriculture so that all may live well. We asked many people why they had stopped going to church. They said that the priests had sided with the Tsar against the workers and farmers. In 1921, during the famine, people petitioned the church to use its great wealth and its gold to buy food for the hungry. But the priests answered that the gold belonged to God and that people asking for such things should be excommunicated. The church not only would not feed the starving, but took part in counter-revolutionary warfare against the workers and farmers.

Part I, Chapter I, Article IV of the Constitution of the R.S.F.S.R., which includes most of pre-revolutionary Russia, reads as follows:

"For the purpose of assuring real liberty of conscience to the workers, the church is separated from the state and the school from the church; and the right of all citizens to practice freely any religious belief or to engage in anti-religious propaganda remains inviolate."

The constitutions of the other Soviet republics, federated into the U.S.S.R., have similar clauses guaranteeing freedom of conscience.

PLANNING OUR TOUR

After the celebration, the 156 delegates to the anniversary from 14 foreign countries met to map out their tour. We wanted to cover the whole Soviet Union and decided that each group would go to a different section. The American and Canadian farm delegates decided to go to the Ukraine because it suffered a drought this year like our own western area. In the United States we had read that hundreds of thousands of people were starving in the Ukraine. We selected our own route and our own stopping places. In many places we took the farmers by surprise. There was no attempt to tell us where to go or to put on a show for us. One of the farms we visited had never before received a foreign delegation. We picked the farms hardest hit by the drought so that we could report the worst conditions.

Before I describe the farms we visited, it is necessary to give a picture of the whole farm problem. Russian agriculture before the revolution was almost as backward as in the Middle Ages.

Plenty of farmers used a wooden plough and had no horses or cows. The horseless farmers were forced to hire out to landlords and rich farmers, whom the Russians called *kulaks*. (*Kulak* means a fist in Russian.) There were almost no schools. Doctors were hundreds of miles apart, and when a baby was born, an old midwife was the only help a mother had. Very few men in the

village might be able to read. One of those would become the "reader" and would read the notices of the authorities or write their letters for the peasants. Even in 1920 only 32% of the whole population of the country could read and write.

When the Revolution started, the peasants moved in on the big landowners. Most of these fled the country. Altogether, two hundred and fifty million acres of farm land held by the monasteries and the landlords were turned over for the use of the poor farmers. Today the law of the land provides that land is for the users of the land. It has been nationalized and cannot be bought or sold but any citizen without capital can find land or join a collective farm or work on a state farm (*sovkhоз*) if he wants to farm. A farmer is taxed only according to what he can produce in any given locality. In drought years or for any other natural causes of crop failure no taxes are levied. This is a sort of income tax based on what he can produce on a given area of land. They do not have to pay our charges of rent, mortgage interest, taxes, etc., etc. Only the Russian farmers have never heard of "evictions" or foreclosures. Land is for use, not for sale. It is really a natural resource and is treated that way.

For the first ten-twelve years after the Revolution Mr. Kulak had to be put up with. He was a shrewd customer and had gotten most of the bigger farm machinery in the community. He had always acted as straw boss for the Baron and the landlord, and he knew how to run and repair the old-fashioned thrashers and engines. At that time Russia was desperate. Food was scarce and there was an iron ring of armies around her borders trying to break down the new government. So Mr. Kulak was allowed to continue. About 7% in the village were of this type. And they hired poor farmers and did custom work as of old. As late as 1928, 27% of the farmers had no working cattle or farm implements and 47% had only ploughs. One-tenth of the spring field crops were still cultivated with the *sokha* or wooden plough, three-fourths of the area in these crops was sown by hand, one-third was harvested with sickle and scythe, and 40% was thrashed by flail. The counter-revolutionary armies were defeated. The

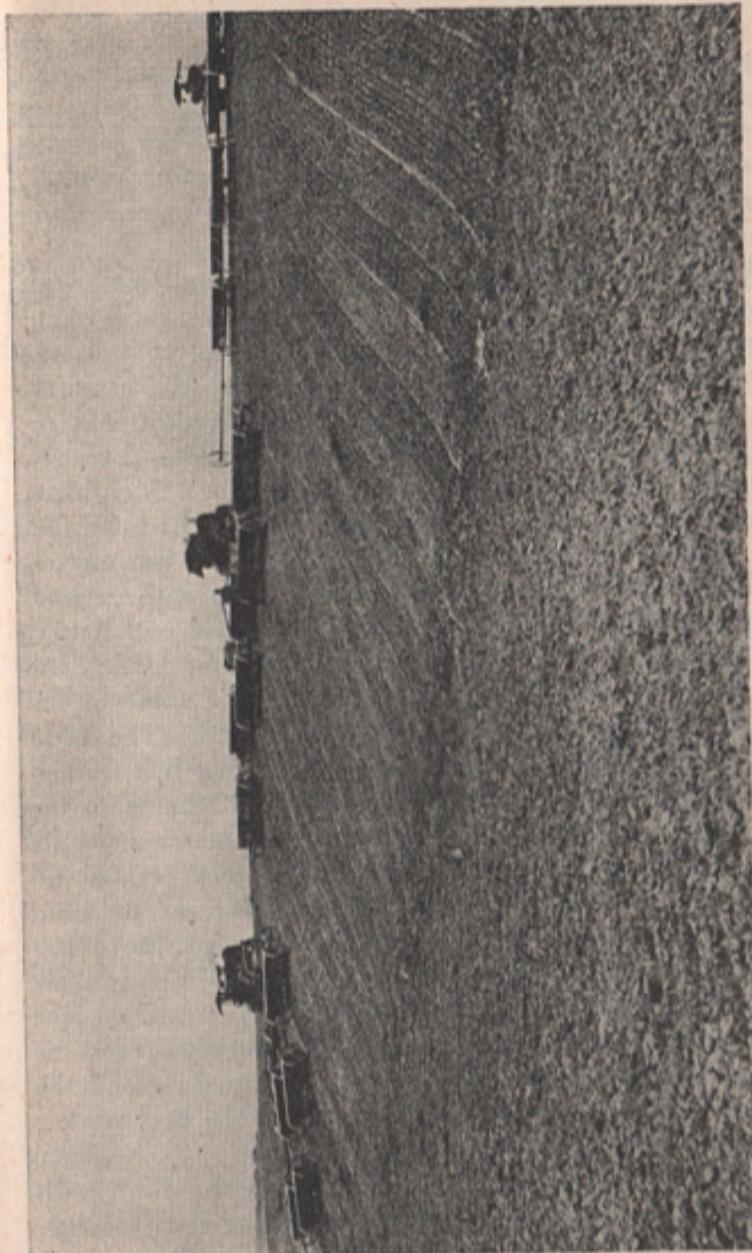
Soviet government won the recognition of the world world. Then it began its own housecleaning. New agricultural methods, new tractors were brought in from the United States. But they were not given to the kulaks.

Producers' cooperatives were formed by poor farmers. They are known there as "Collectives" or in Russian "Kolkhozes". Modern thrashing machines and finally combines began to buzz around the villages. Farmers no longer had to work for Mr. Kulak. They could borrow capital of their own and get farm equipment from the Soviet government. Every village hated the kulaks for almost every family had tasted the whip of the old order in the hands of some local kulak. From then on Mr. Kulak rapidly lost out.

Today 90 per cent of the sown area of the Soviet Union is handled by collective and state farms. All thrashing is done by machine. From 1928 to 1932 tractors increased from 26,700 to 148,500. Soviet tractor plants produced 78,300 tractors in 1933 and approximately 92,500 in 1934. At the end of 1932, the close of the first Five-Year Plan, the national inventory of agricultural equipment and machinery had increased 57.9% over 1928.

During the last few years there has been a great rush of farmers to join collectives; they saw their increased production, the shorter working hours, the cultural advantages of group life, schools and theatres and better houses which these collectives were able to build. Collectivization made it much easier to eliminate illiteracy. In 1931-1932 three million farmers studied in rural schools for this purpose, and from 1919 to 1934 45,000,000 people have learned to read and write. By 1933 90% of the people could read and write.

Beginning January 1, 1935, an important step has been taken. Bread cards will no longer be required from buyers. During times of shortage the bread card system was developed in order to see that everyone got his share but no more. Now that there is no longer any shortage at all, the bread card has been done away with. This is a sign of the success of the collective farms.



NINETY ACRES PER HOUR!
A battery of three 60 "Cats" seeding 216 feet at three and a half miles per hour.

STATE FARM "SHCHERBINOVKA"

The first farm we visited was the State Farm of Shcherbinovka in the Kharkov district. The government operates 5,000 such farms, particularly for grain and cattle-breeding. They serve as schools and demonstration stations for the surrounding country. The farmers on these state farms work for definite wages, belong to trade unions, just like industrial workers.

Shcherbinovka farm was started in 1924 on a small scale with 45 cows and 1,500 acres. It grows wheat, corn, rye, barley and lots of sunflowers. By 1934 it had grown so fast that it was divided into two farms each having 750 cows and 10,650 acres. The farm which we visited had 450 farmers and additional resources of 13 Russian tractors, 3 International tractors, 2 trucks, one car, and 119 horses. The farm had a school for 110 children in 4 classes. We arrived at meal time and were invited to come in and eat. There was a radio going and everything was electrified. We had a real good supper: vegetable soup with carrots, cabbage, etc., meat, potatoes, cabbage, apples, bread and butter, wine, milk, tea and a very good head cheese of some kind. The children sang all kinds of songs while we ate and some of the farmers played accordions. As we ate we talked. The farm workers told us that though before the Revolution they had worked from sunrise to sunset, now they worked 10 to 12 hours in the busy season, and 6 to 8 hours in the winter. Unmarried people went to the factories in the winter months if they wanted to. They told us that while this had not yet been achieved the plan was for each family in the state farm to have 3 pigs, 50 to 100 chickens, and one cow by 1936, for private use in addition to their share in returns on the farm. They all had their own gardens where they grew vegetables and flowers. (All Russia struck me as being full of flowers.) Livestock is distributed among the families according to how good their work is. The best worker gets a cow before other workers, and so on.

When we finished eating we walked around the farm with 150 or 200 people following us. They had never seen foreigners before and asked all kinds of questions.

Later we went to their hall, a sort of county theatre, which three farms had built together. This theatre was 10 miles from Shcherbinovka, is seated about a thousand people, had rest rooms, reading rooms, and a forty-piece orchestra recruited from the state farms. It was a real swell place and brand new. They had movies or plays several times a week.

The Canadian delegate and I could not believe that this farm was hard hit by the drought. We decided to consult two Machine Tractor Stations in the Ukraine which furnish tractors and combines to about 125 farms and really know the conditions of the farms in the area. We asked them to tell us the toughest hit farms. They suggested that we go to the German collective and to a commune farm in the Dnieprostroi district.

THE GERMAN COLLECTIVE

This collective farm in the Dnieprostroi district was one of the worst sufferers from the drought. It had 240 working members when we visited it. The forefathers of the present farmers came over from Germany over a hundred years ago and set up a little town in a hollow, farming the surrounding land. In 1928 the members of this village called a meeting and elected a delegation to investigate collectives in the Soviet Union. The closest collective farm was then 90 miles away. The delegation brought back such a glowing report of the advantages of collectivization that the German settlers decided to organize a collective immediately. The delegates told about reductions in working hours, social insurance for the collective, absence of risks from crop failure because the workers' and farmers' government protected them from starvation, cancellation of taxes and grants of aid in bad years, social benefits of community life in the form of recreation, education, etc.

Since the collective is today the most important form of farm organization in the U.S.S.R., I asked many questions about how it is run and managed. Today most of the collectives consist of a group of farmers working along cooperative lines. Only labor, land, machinery and implements, draft-cattle and farm buildings

are socialized. Homes and the land attached to them, small cattle and part of the dairy cattle, and some poultry are not socialized but belong to the individual farmer and give him an additional source of income. The collective farms are so interested in bettering the position of their members that they help those who have no cows, etc., to get them. Over a period of time, farmers are paid back for all the equipment that they put in when they joined the collective.

Various public institutions to improve the social and cultural life of the collective farmers are being greatly increased. There are children's nurseries, dining halls, kitchens, bakeries, laundries, and so on, the use of which is strictly voluntary.

Every collective farm has a constitution, adopted by a general meeting of the farmer members. All the more important questions arising in the collective farm are discussed and decided at the general meeting. Even the constitution of the collective can be changed by a majority vote of the general meeting. The general meeting passes on the productive plan of the collective which sets the amount of work, the amount of labor to be used, the time for completing various jobs, and so on. A board of management is elected for managing the production of the collective farm and for putting into effect the decisions of the general meetings. Except for the chairman, the members of the collective farm management board are not released from field work and other jobs. They must do as much as all the other members.

The entire working force of the collective farm is divided into brigades. Definite inventories and pieces of land are assigned to the brigades. Each brigade has its own production task which it carries through the entire season.

Work on the collective farm is paid for on the basis of the quantity and quality of work done. Those who work more and better are paid more. All the work is divided according to the skill required and the importance of the different jobs. All rates of pay are calculated in work days. A certain amount of work of average difficulty is set by each farm as a standard work-day.

If a farmer works harder or more efficiently he can earn more than a work-day in one day. More complicated and skilled labor, such as that of machinists, receives a higher rate of pay; for example, for every day worked more than one work-day is credited. Rates of pay are reduced for work of bad quality and where there is clear negligence, labor is not paid for at all.

Every collective farmer knows in advance what work he has to do. The quantity and quality of his work-days are accounted for daily and entered in his labor book once every five days.

At the end of the agricultural year every collective farmer receives a definite part of the income of the collective farm on the basis of his total work-days. This does not mean that he is paid only once a year. Several times during the season he gets advances in money and in kind proportionate to his share in the income of the farm.

Today this German collective is fully electrified. Electricity is used for thrashing. They have telephones and a radio hookup in every home, a library, and a good school. There was less rainfall this year than in the terrible famine year of 1921. Yet, this year the collective produced much more grain. This year, with more acres sown, with better plowing and more technical advice, with tractors and help from the government, they have plenty to eat. They received, this year, an average of 3,000 quarts of milk and 400 pounds of butter per family, which is almost twice as much as I can give my family. They made a profit of 250,000 rubles this year from 2,873 sown acres. They have 450 cows, 200 pigs, and 20 brood sows. Every family has a cow and chickens of its own in addition to what they have in the collective. The farm also has 59 work horses and 20 oxen. The families have their own gardens also. In this collective the farmers lived in their pre-revolutionary houses which were in good condition.

As we walked around the farm we didn't see any signs of shortage. We stopped one man on his doorstep and asked whether there was any scarcity of food. In reply he invited us in to supper. We had a good meal. He was an old timer and told us about conditions before the revolution. They are much better

now. Better plowing and more sown acreage have eliminated the possibility of starvation. We asked him to explain how the tractor stations worked since we had noticed that this collective had no tractors of its own.

This farmer explained that the Machine Tractor Stations have been set up because there are still not enough tractors and combines manufactured to go round in the U.S.S.R. The stations send tractors and experts to run them from one farm to another and keep the tractors in more continuous use than the farms could if they owned their own. The collective gets the use of the tractor at cost and has it run by an expert who gets more work out of it. The tractor station makes contracts with the collectives to give them tractors on specified dates for a specified time. If the station delays sending the tractors and the crop is injured for some reason in the meantime, the station must pay for the damage. This makes the tractor station on time, too.

I asked about the profits which this collective showed this year. He explained that a certain part of the crop, so many bushels per acre, according to the plan for sowing, is sold to the government at a fixed price to insure a supply of food to workers in the factories and to other city people. The larger the number of acres sown, the lower this part of the crop, in percentage terms. If the harvest is better than planned, the state delivery required is not increased and if more acreage has been sown than was planned for, deliveries are made only on the acreage in the plan. The rest of the crop may be sold later at a higher price. In return for selling a fixed part of the crop to the government the farmers get clothing and other supplies at a low price. The money received for that part of the crop delivered to the state, and the rest of the produce of the farm or the income from it, except for seed and other reserves, is divided up among the members of the collective according to the number of work-days each has put in. Of course each person spends his money in any way he pleases.

The profits of the collective are used as the collective decides, e.g., to increase herds of cattle, numbers of hogs, to build better

barns, silos and homes, and, in general, to improve conditions in the collective.

Collectives may make special assessments among their memberships for special improvements. In case of crop failure, taxes are cancelled. Often the government has to step in and prevent the collective from sacrificing too much in order to build up its holdings. Russia seems to be a country where one of the functions of the government is to stop people from taxing themselves too heavily.

COMMUNE FARM IN DNIEPROSTROI DISTRICT

This farm was one of the three farms in the Ukraine which didn't have to pay taxes last year, because of crop failure. Once its members were in three small collectives. Today they are all in one commune where they pool all their property except the personal belongings and what is used individually. There are 445 people in this commune of whom 211 are working members. The commune has about 500 cows, and 82 members have their own cows. There were 12 electric milking machines. Many of the members were formerly unskilled workers in small villages. They are much better off than ever before. All live in one large apartment building. They have one, two and three room apartments depending on the size of their families. They have electricity, running water, radios, steam heat, a children's nursery, and a bath house with bathtubs and showers. You must remember that before the Revolution these families lived in one room sod huts and slept on wooden shelves along the walls. Already their standard of living is enormously improved, and, in time, they will have larger apartments, private baths, and other things which in our country only the rich are accustomed to. To these farmers the Revolution has meant more and better food, shoes instead of bark and rags for their feet, many social activities, education, security, and a slate-roofed concrete apartment house instead of a sod hut. The workers' and farmers' government is their own and they will get improved facilities just as soon as they together with other farmers and workers produce the physical means of providing these improvements.

The fall work was done and the winter wheat looked good. They had enough grain for seed in the spring without state help. They figured that they had enough feed and roughage to put the cattle through till spring. But they were not sure that they could get through to the next crop without assistance. However, they didn't fear starvation for themselves or their cattle. Already their taxes had been cancelled, permanently, and not just carried over with interest until later. They knew they would get all the help they needed. They had plenty to eat and their food was good.

Farmers organizing a commune pool all their equipment, land and animals, and share the product of the farm according to the amount of work they have put in in the course of the season. The commune form of organization is not very widespread at present in Russia, and was developed principally by the very poorest farmers and workers who started in with very little property.

STATE GRAPE AND FRUIT FARM

We spent a few hours on this state farm near Odessa where they grow apples, plums and grapes and make their wine. We had lunch with the farmers and counted 32 quart bottles of wine of different kind: old, new, sweet, sour, etc.

At first this farm had 140 acres of grapes. Last year there were 340 acres. By 1937 the plan calls for 1,500 acres in grapes and other fruits.

The state fruit farms are not the only source of fruit in the U.S.S.R. Last year the government donated 1,000,000 fruit trees to farms and factories. Many factories have their own orchards. In Odessa we saw sailors planting fruit trees for the orchard of the Sailors' Club, both the trees and the supervision of horticulturists being supplied by the government.

THE FARMERS' GAZETTE

Throughout my 5,000 miles of travel I got a lot of help from the farmers' newspaper, the *Farmers' Gazette*. This paper now has a circulation of 1,800,000. Two years ago, the figure was over three million but the increase in the number of collectives since

then has reduced the number of papers sold though it has increased the number of readers of each copy of the paper. (Each collective or several in a neighborhood also publish their own paper which deals chiefly with local questions.) The *Farmers' Gazette* is issued every other day in Moscow. It receives about 2,000 letters every other day from farmer readers and has a staff of 100 people who spend all their time taking care of this mail. Every farmer gets an answer to his complaint or his questions about grain, breeding, and so on. The paper also has 15,000 farm correspondents. The paper has 12 airplanes at its disposal which it can send all over the Soviet Union to investigate any difficulties that may arise. This correspondence with the farmers of the country is very useful in informing the government about what the farmers want and in helping it to serve them. A government which is established and controlled by workers and farmers, and which is constantly teaching the people that the land and everything it produces is theirs to dispose of as they decide, cannot long continue if it does things to which the people are opposed. For workers and farmers are armed and organized and in a position to see that they get what they want.

The *Farmers' Gazette* offered me the use of a plane so that I could cover more distance in the Ukraine, but there was so much rain and bad weather all the time I was in Russia that I couldn't accept the offer.

CONCLUSION

Everywhere we went the farmers were very much interested in America. They couldn't believe the things they heard about it. "Is it true", they asked, "that you kill your cattle and bury them in pits because you haven't enough to feed them, and that you do this when people are starving?" "Is it true that farmers are chased out of their homes because their crops are so small that they can't pay taxes and interest?" "Is it true that schools are being closed all over when there are children who need the schools?" "How can everybody in the United States hope to have more if production is cut and less is produced?" "In our country we are getting better houses. Before the Revolution we

lived in sod huts. Now we have concrete houses with electricity, radios, running water. We put a sod hut in a glass case so that our children will remember the days of the Tsar." I saw one such sod hut in a glass case in Gorlovsk. It was very tiny and used to "house" 12 people. "We work shorter hours and have more of everything. We are insured against sickness and have vacations with pay. We can travel all over the country for very little. It's true we had a drought this year. But we have plenty to eat and to feed our cattle. Some farms had their taxes cancelled. 1,293,549 tons of seed and fodder are being given to drought-stricken farms this year. No one starves here. We no longer have to work for the kulak, the capitalist exploiter. Everything is ours. When reports of the danger of drought came in, the sowing plan for grain was increased by 1,750,000 acres. We resowed where the seed didn't grow, we planted late crops, and the government helped us to irrigate the land. We even have an Institute for Artificial Rain which has begun to make rain with chemicals thrown on the clouds from airplanes. Because we have collective farms which we operate for ourselves we have so improved our methods that in this drought year bread cards have been abolished. Because we have raised so much grain we no longer have to worry that everybody get enough bread. And we have long ago made it illegal to speculate in bread. That's why we have been able to stop bread cards. Now anybody can buy as much bread as he wants."

Since I have returned from the Soviet Union I learned that all debts of Soviet collective farmers to the Agricultural Bank have been abolished by decree. This decree releases 435,639,000 roubles (about half as many dollars) for use by the collectives for purposes which they see fit, and probably will improve schools, homes, herds, etc.

In answer to these questions of the Russian farmers about the United States, I could only admit that in the United States drought has brought evictions and shortages, that here unemployment means near starvation even though we have the land, the machinery, and the knowledge to produce enough for everybody.

What impressed me most in Russia is that everything is being built up. Production has gone up rapidly in every line. Not only is no one starving but everybody has a job. The farmers and workers have better housing, better food, and better clothing than ever before, and they are planning for better things. They have social insurance, free hospitals, recreation of all sorts, school for grown-ups as well as for children, and an opportunity to travel. They take an active part in everything that is done. The whole country is really in the control of the farmers and wage-workers. Yesterday they passed the world in pig iron production. Soon they will have the highest standards of living. It's something to think about.

Questions and Answers

People have asked me a great many questions about Soviet Russia since I have been back. Because they tend to repeat themselves I have listed the most important ones with my answers for the benefit of readers.

Question: Were farmers forced into collectives?

Answer: Farmers are not forced to join collective farms. The advantages of the collectives are more than enough to make the farmers want to join of their own free will. The yield is greater as a result of mechanized, large scale cultivation. The income of each farmer is raised accordingly; new hospitals, better schools, recreational facilities, and modern homes soon become available; and social insurance is provided.

In the early days of collectivization, when not as many farmers saw and knew the advantages of this method of organization, some of the farmers tried using heavy-handed methods on other farmers to get them to join. But the use of such methods was soon stopped; and any farmer who wanted to could withdraw. Still the number of collectives and of farmers in them has continued to increase. This can only be explained by the fact that the farmers themselves were anxious to enter these cooperatives as soon as they saw the advantages of the new life.

Question: Are collective farmers allowed to own anything in Russia?

Answer: Absolutely yes. In the first place they only collectivize their farms if they want to. But many other things continue to be owned individually. This question can best be answered for farmers by quoting from a model constitution for collective farms:

"Article III, Section 4, The Means of Production.

"The following are to be collectivized: all working animals, agri-

cultural inventory, all commercial productive livestock, all seed reserves, all cattle, fodder necessary for the operation of the collective, and all enterprises for working up agricultural products. Dwellings of members are not subject to socialization.

"While general agricultural inventory is socialized, smaller agricultural implements necessary for garden and orchard work may be retained for individual use by members.

"In case of necessity the administration of the collective may set aside from the socialized working cattle the minimum number of working stock necessary to serve the individual needs of the members.

"In farms with one cow, milk cattle are not subject to collectivization. In farms with more than one cow, one cow is left for personal use and the remaining cows are socialized. Breeding cows are to be socialized in any case. . . .

"In districts where there is a well developed small livestock industry, small livestock such as pigs and sheep, are to be socialized, but a certain number of small livestock, the number to be determined by the collective, will be retained by members. In districts where there is no small livestock industry, pigs and sheep are not to be socialized. Poultry are not subject to socialization.

"While small livestock and poultry are to be left with the individual members, at the same time the collective will organize a small livestock and poultry industry.

"Each collective must establish an untouchable seed and food fund as insurance against harvest failure and lack of food."

"Article II, Section 2, Land.

"While all the allotments are socialized, the land surrounding the houses (gardens, orchards, etc.) is set aside for individual usage. . . ."

Question: What is the role of the Communist Party in Soviet Russia?

Answer: In talking with the Russian workers and farmers, I found that the most active ones and those looked upon as the best leaders were members of the Communist Party. They told me how this party had been organized by the working class with Lenin as its leader long before the Revolution, when it meant persecution and exile to belong to it. During these early years and in the Revolution, they said, this was the only party that really led the workers and poor peasants against their enemies, until they had won and established a Workers' and Farmers' Government. It is this same party which leads them now in building

a new social system, in building big factories and socialized farming which they themselves own and operate.

Question: Are people allowed to go to church and practice religion?

Answer: People may go to church and support whatever religion they choose. The government does not interfere. As I found out, it was only after the Revolution that religious freedom was given to the people. Before that they had the state religion of the Tsars and religious persecution. They told me of terrible pogroms under the Tsar against the Jews. In the section of this report on the *Church and Religion* you will find what their constitution says about this subject.

Because the experience of workers and farmers in Russia showed that in the Revolution the church and the priests were on the side of the rich, they had to take sharp measures against the priests who plotted against the workers. They separated the church from the State and from the schools. It is now the law that no children under 18 years of age may be given any formal religious training. A mother and father can teach their children any religion they wish and their children can go to church, but no school or church can hold formal religious classes for boys or girls under 18. After that age it may be done.

Question: Can a farmer sell his produce in the open market?

Answer: A certain amount of grain, etc., is sold by the farmers to the government at fixed prices; the rest of the farmer's crop which he has to sell can be sold at higher prices to the government, or the workers' cooperatives, or in the open market as the farmer wishes. However no speculators are allowed to buy and sell in the open market. Speculators are caught and punished severely for trying to make profits off the workers and farmers. These public markets were opened for the benefit of the workers and farmers where they could sell what they produce and get goods they want and not for profiteers to make money out of.

Question: What kinds of social insurance do they have in the U.S.S.R.?

Answer: The Labor Code, adopted November 15, 1922, provides for social insurance to cover free medical aid; payment during temporary incapacity to work due to illness, accident, quarantine, pregnancy, childbirth, or the necessity of caring for a sick member of the family; supplementary benefits for retirement, the care of infants, and death; the payment of invalid insurance; and payment to persons whose breadwinner has died or disappeared. In addition, old age pensions, introduced May 15, 1929, are payable at 55 years. Funds are administered exclusively by representatives of the workers through their trade unions which are coordinated for the whole country into a central organization. Insured persons are entitled to free medical and preventive treatment at clinics, first-aid stations, hospitals, sanitaria, and at home, and to free dental and orthopedic treatment. This includes free medicine, artificial teeth, eyeglasses, bandages, artificial limbs, and anything else required. The insurance privileges also hold for all members of the family of the insured.

Since the collective farms draw up their own rules the insurance of collective farmers runs in somewhat different terms but farmers in collectives have insurance along the same lines. The general meeting of the collective (discussed in connection with the German collective) has the power to decide what forms of insurance its members are to have.

Question: What are the provisions of the Second Five-Year Plan?

Answer: Of course, it is impossible to state all the parts of the plan in this report. I don't know them all and they would fill a good-sized book. But I can give some of the most important features.

Real income of collective farmers and real wages of workers are to increase over 100% in 1937. The consumption of farmers in 1937 is to reach a higher level than the level of well-to-do farmers in 1927. Per capita income of farmers is to be 45%

greater. The standard of life and cultural facilities of collective farmers are to reach the level of well-to-do city inhabitants of pre-war times.

One hundred per cent collectivization of agriculture is expected by 1937. The plan is to have agriculture better equipped and mechanized than that of the United States. The production of chemical fertilizers is to multiply 9 times. The number of tractors is to be, in 1937, 368.5% of 1932 in horsepower terms.

Plowing is to be mechanized 80%, cultivating 70%, grain harvesting 60%, and threshing 100%.

Production of agricultural machinery

	1932	1937
Combines (thousands)	15.5	100
Thrashers (thousands)	47.7	80
Electrical dynamos (thousands of kilowatts)	65.9	425
Repair shops	2,320	6,920
Motor trucks (thousands)	14.5	128

There is to be an increase in the cash and kind disbursements of collectives to their members; livestock, poultry, vegetable and fruit-raising on a private basis for family needs are to be increased. Individual holdings of cattle are to grow as follows: cattle—from 26 million to 45 million, cows—from 15.5 million to 19 million, sheep and goats—from 32 million to 53 million, pigs—from 6 million to 27 million.

Now for some even more general figures. The gross value of industrial production is to increase 114% but that of the light and food industries is to grow 134%. Textiles are to increase 164%, output of the flour industry 147%, meat packing 214%, canned goods 194%, sugar 201%. The variety of all textile goods is to be greatly increased.

Cooperative and state stores are to replace the card system of distribution. There is to be an increase in public restaurants. 13.4 billion roubles are to be spent on housing as against 4 billion roubles in the first Five-Year Plan.

I would also like to give a few figures to show the difference between Russia in 1913 and the U.S.S.R. in 1933.

	1913	1933	% of 1913
Population (millions)	139.3	165.7	119.0
Urban (% of total)	17.7	24.0	—
Rural (% of total)	82.3	76.0	—
National Income (in billions of roubles in 1926/27 prices)	21.0	50.1	238.6
Industry (gross output of large-scale industry in millions of roubles in 1926/27 prices)	10,251	40,173	391.9
Agriculture (sown area in millions of acres)	262.5	324.3	123.5

Question: Is Stalin a dictator?

Answer: Joseph Stalin is secretary of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. This is the highest office in the Party. Neither he nor the Communist Party exercise a dictatorship. The reason the Communist Party is so important in the U.S.S.R. today is that it led the Revolution which made the accomplishments shown above possible. And they continue to lead in building a better life for the people.

They explain that this is a dictatorship of the proletariat. This means a government controlled by workers and farmers, dictating to any speculator or any capitalist-class elements in Russia and ready to defend the country against the foreign capitalists. No kulak (big farmer), or other capitalist can vote or be a citizen of Soviet Russia, or have anything to say about the government or the laws.

The influence of the Communist Party is proportionate to the confidence of the people in it, since the people elect their representatives in a democratic way. Among the workers and farmers—as they explained—there is more democracy than ever existed before and greater than the workers and farmers of other countries have.

Question: What are the laws about marriage in the Soviet Union?

Answer: When two people want to get married in Russia, they go to an office provided for the purpose where they show their identification and sign their names in a registration book. There

is a small fee. Divorces are granted at the request of one of the married parties. If there are no children the divorce is again only a matter of an entry in a book. If there are children an arrangement is made for their care. Both the man and the woman are held responsible. Only if the provision for the children is not satisfactory is the matter taken to the courts. In spite of the fact that it's so easy to get a divorce in Russia the proportionate number of divorces is no higher there than in the United States. A man and woman living together without registration are also considered to be married.

Question: Are children taken away from parents at the age of 2 or 3?

Answer: Children are not separated from parents at 3 or at any other age. Women are encouraged to have children by insurance provisions for pregnancy, and childbearing; nurseries are provided for the children of working women; fine schools and special scholarships for workers' children make it much easier to raise a family. Free medical care and facilities keep the children healthy. In fact the government considers children a special responsibility for whom nothing is too good. There are no illegitimate children in the U.S.S.R. The laws and social regulations make every child legitimate and treated so, without any social stigma, whether the parents were registered or not at the marriage bureau before the birth of the child.

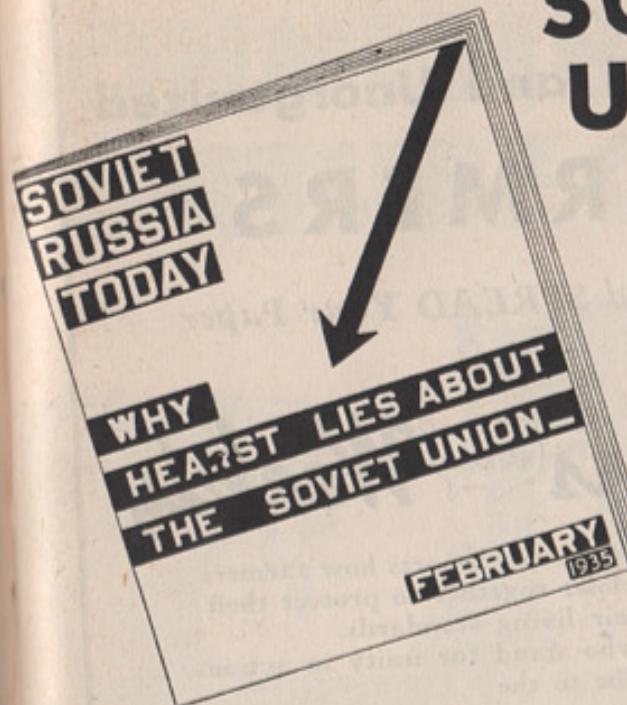
Question: How many hours do the farmers work?

Answer: The farmers on each collective farm set their own hours of work according to the season and the work to be done.

Question: What does "Soviet" stand for?

Answer: Soviet means an elected council of workers' and farmers' representatives. The government is called Soviet government because it is managed by these councils and congresses, or Soviets as they are called in Russia, composed of delegates elected by workers, farmers, Red Army men, and the sailors of the Red Fleet. The legislative, executive and administrative powers are all combined in the hands of the Soviets. The U.S.S.R. means the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

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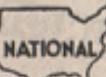
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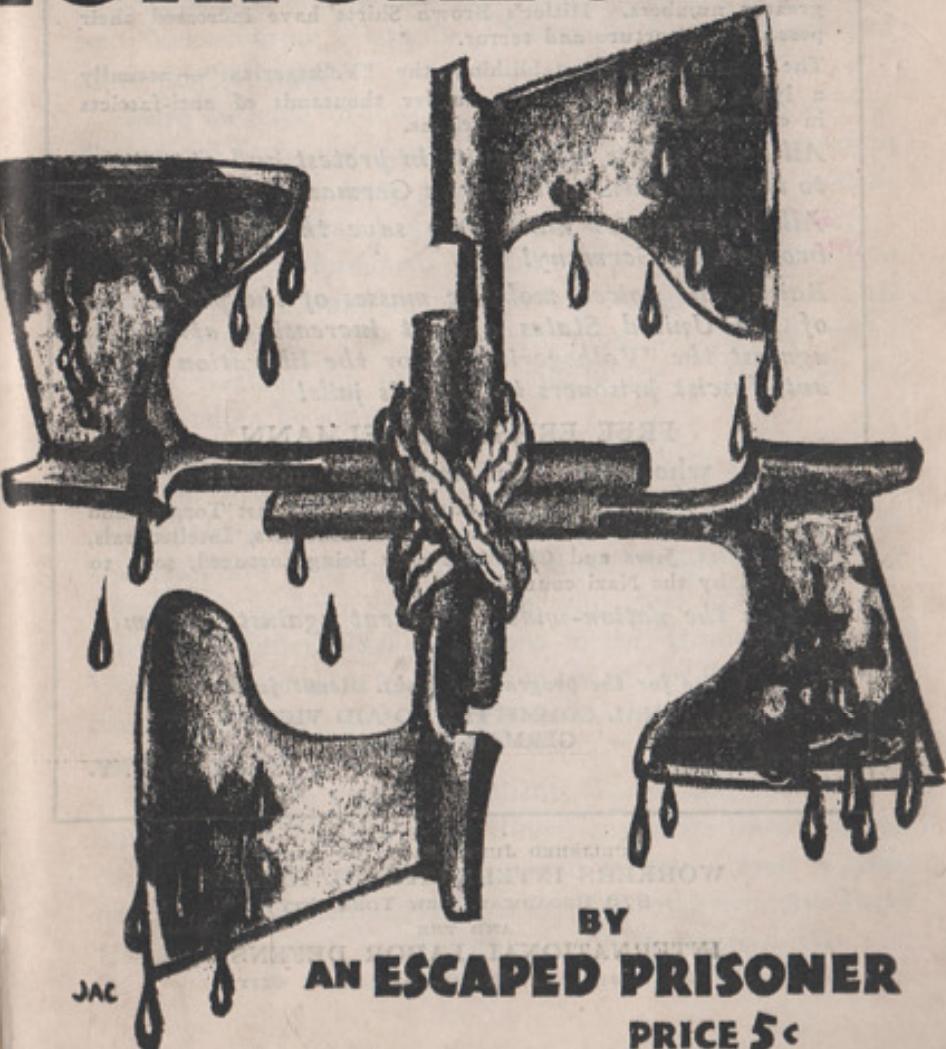
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